

critical digest

Vol. II No. 28

May 1, 1950

The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

N.Y. Opening This Week

Brigadoon-City Center, 5/2/50. Limited three week engagement of hit musical which played on Broadway for 581 performances in 1947-1948. Popular prices.

Daily Critics View the New Plays

Peter Pan-Imperial, 4/24/50. The unpredictable drama critics, who had been apprehensive about the chances of the Barrie revival in an atomic world, fell for the classic fantasy and Captain Hook, Pan and Tinker. Garland, Journal American, was the sole dissenter among the newspaper reviewers. He admitted Hook didn't scare him, and that Pan did grow old. Watts, Post, registered a "so-so" vote. Parts of the play remained fresh and lovely, but moments were too coy and gushy for comfort. If his colleagues viewed it as a new play, Watts predicted, they would call it a nice little comedy, but not a masterpiece. But 12 daily critics were completely enchanted by the entire proceedings. Jean Arthur and Boris Karloff shared the acting honors, with Marcia Henderson winning acclaim for portrayal as Wendy. Chapman, News, wants to see Karloff try Gilbert and Sullivan. Leonard Bernstein's songs weren't as strong as his background music, commented Sheaffer, Eagle. Bolton, Morning Telegraph, summed up the majority opinion when he wrote "If you don't believe in Peter Pan something has been left out of your life."

A Phoenix Too Frequent and Freight-Fulton, 4/26/50-4/29/50. Introduction of Christopher Fry, prolific British playwright, via Phoenix wasn't successful, twin bill closed after five performances. Most critics gave Fry the benefit of the doubt, praising his blank verse technique, his wonderful sense of humor and his witty comments. They objected to the utter lack of plot and action, plus the fact that the director and cast didn't understand Fry's tongue in cheek technique. Vicki Cummings played more in the proper spirit than did leads, Nina Foch and Richard Derr. Sheaffer, Eagle, was the only critic to recommend play. Kenneth White's Freight received mixed press. Critics of Times, Mirror, Compass, Post and Women's Wear found it a stunning, powerful one acter on race relations. Others thought it was tasteless and poorly done. Chapman, News, wrote his "pan" review in blank verse.

Shows That Closed

With A Silk Thread-Lyceum, 4/12/50-4/22/50. Elsa Shelley play, produced by husband Irving Kaye Davis succumbed after 13 performances, critics were unanimously opposed to play, cast, acting and direction.

Caesar and Cleopatra-National, 12/21/49-4/29/50. Shaw revival featuring Cedric Hardwicke and Lilli Palmer was most popular play of the season with critics. Of the 30 critics rated 26 liked it, "con" votes were filed by critics of Compass, Journal American and Daily Worker.

Magazine Reviewers Rate the Shows

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Haunting, harrowing, documentary type work of art is the way Brown, SRL, views the Menotti musical drama hit. Admitting it wouldn't be as good as a play, the critic picked Patricia Neway as one of the most exciting discoveries in years. No need to worry about the health of the theatre with such productions about, concluded Brown.

News & Notes

Lee Tracy admitted on his WOR Theatrical Page program that he was "honestly befuddled" by the problems of acting in arena type drama. He has signed to appear in The Show Off, first "Theatre in the Round" play to be shown at the Hotel Edison ballroom, May 29.

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' The Green Room Department '
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DELAYED MINORITY REPORT...Now that Kiss Me, Kate is well into its second year, Gilbert Seldes, WNEW The Lively Arts, thinks it is safe to reveal the musical rubbed him the wrong way. He lays the blame to the original theme of Taming of the Shrew, upon which the hit is based. The Shakespeare play if ever revived, should be picketed by every self respecting participant in the battle of the sexes. ~~Theme of classic, as that aimed by merely starring a wild female who change her into an obedient wife.~~

NEW THEATRE PROPOSALS...Herald Tribune editorial praised recommendations of City Council committee to revise building codes to allow construction of new theatres. Councilman Quinn says passage would lead to seven new legitimate theatres. Daily News roundup discovered that most theatre people were in favor of the proposed amendment to allow bars in theatres.

PRE PETER PANNING...Confessing that he was never a "Peter Pantheist" Garland, Journal American, explained why he would probably not like the new production of the Barrie classic. Recalling that the American critics in 1905 had only foul words for the Charles Frohman production, the critic admitted he always thought the play was long drawn out and sappy. He didn't like the current production, though he reported Dorothy Kilgallen's son "loved it".

LUCRATIVE ROAD...Traveling company of Mister Roberts, now settled down in Boston, is loaded with dough, the manager told Morehouse, WT&S. Many of the cast have bought cars, all are sending bank deposits home weekly. The speech has been slightly edited for Boston ears, but the reviews were so good that the cast have moved into apartments. John Forsythe plays the leading role.

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' Interview Round Up '
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THE PEOPLE OF THE CONSUL...Theatre fans are fascinated by the twin facts that Patricia Neway, star of the musical drama, lives in an \$18 a month cold water flat (with hot water added), and that there are such low rent units available, reported Wilson, Post...Andrew McKinley, who plays the role of the magician, leads a hectic life, Hawkins, WT&S discovered. In addition to his taxing part, McKinley teaches violin at Julliard and is the managing director of a Bronx non-profit settlement school...Time's Music Department features long profile on Gian Carlo Menotti, plus portrait on cover.

ARTHUR KENNEDY..."To Become A Better Actor" has been the long time motto of the featured player of Death of a Salesman, Fields, Mirror learned. Kennedy, who has been helped by many of the theatre's famous, walked out on Hollywood once because they gave him a succession of bad parts. He recently took a leave from the Miller play to make The Glass Menagerie.

NINA FOCH...Definitely on the Fry bandwagon, the star of A Phoenix Too Frequent explained that the play really isn't in verse to Sheaffer, Eagle. She meant that author Fry wished the actors to disregard the verse in playing. He wrote it in poem form, he told the cast, because he liked the nice, clean, white margins in poetry books.

ARTHUR KLEIN...Producer of Tickets Please did the impossible by spending only \$50,000 on the Hartmans revue. Advance planning to insure a simple set in good taste, plus the fact that sets made in late season don't have to be rushed are the reasons he told Rice, Post.

RANDOM NOTES...William Archibald, author of The Innocents, will dance on NBC-TV "Shows of Shows"...Sir Cedric Hardwicke, co-star of Caesar and Cleopatra, spoke at the UN in a panel sponsored by the American Public Relations Association.

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' Off Broadway '
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Paul Green's Tread the Green Grass was given a tryout by Abbe Practical Theatre, and a workout by the four reviewers who covered it. Catta, Times, and Garland, Journal American, felt Pulitzer Prize winners play was a poor combination of Dark of the Moon and The Devil's Disciple. Watts, Post, agreed that Green is an author worth encouraging, but deemed this one "pretentious futility". Variety reporter found nothing of interest...Revival of James Bridie's Tobias and the Angel by On Stage wasn't received happily by Shanley, Times, and Pihodna, Herald Tribune. Acting and direction and script were panned. Garland found it comical in a "Scottish Shavian" fashion. He enjoyed the humorous version of the Bible story, but thought it should be toned down a bit...Dramatic Workshop production of John F. Matthews fantasy The Scape goat was named as one of the most original dramas of the season by Atkinson, Times. Play suggested by Franz Kafka's "The Trial" was praised as imaginative, stinging and pertinent. Trade paper critics felt show was too experimental. Francis, who admitted he hadn't read the book, was a bit confused....Tallulah Bankhead is a one woman circus in Noel Coward's Private Lives, Sheaffer, Eagle, comments. Comedy is playing two week stand at Flatbush Theatre, Brooklyn...H.M.S. Pinafore in Yiddish presented by Brooklyn Hadassah is hilarious and well done says Rice, Post.

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'Add Theatre Awards '
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The Outer Circle, organization of theatre writers from out of town papers, picked The Cocktail Party and The Consul as the best play and musical of the current season. Daniel Reed, Come Back, Little Sheba, and Shelia Guyse, Lost in the Stars, were chosen for outstanding performances in minor roles....Grace George, The Velvet Glove, has been named the 15th winner of the annual Comedia Matinee Club's medallion. Former winners include Raymond Massey, Gertrude Lawrence and Ethel Barrymore...Shirley Booth, Come Back, Little Sheba, received the Barter Theatre Award of an acre of Virginia mountainside and a baked sugar-cured ham. Later she will select two young players to appear with the Barter group, this season...Sidney Kingsley, author of Detective Story, won an "Edgar" bust from Mystery Writers of America...Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun, picked Hepburn and Blackmer as best performers of the season and The Cocktail Party as best play of the season. He will vote for Iris Mann and David Cole the youngsters in The Innocents, in the Derwent award.

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' Key To NYC Criticism At A Glance '
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Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. Photostats of reviews may be obtained at 25 cents each to subscribers, 50 cents each to others.

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| 1. NY Times | 11. Newark News | 21. Catholic World |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 12. Women's Wear Daily | 22. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 13. Daily Worker | 23. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (Star, PM) | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post | 16. George Jean Nathan | 26. Newsweek |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse) | 17. Morning Telegraph | 27. Time |
| 8. NY Journal American | 18. Variety | 28. Nation |
| 9. NY World Telegram and Sun | 19. Billboard | 29. New Republic |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle | 20. Theatre Arts | 30. New Yorker |

Random Notes

John Mason Brown, SRL, has sold the screen rights of "Morning Faces" to David O. Selznick...Louis Kronenberger, Time, will lecture at the Bryn Mawr College Summer Theatre.

Arms and the Girl-46th Street Theatre, 2/2/50. Pro: 3-4-5-10-11-12-14-15-17-19-23-24-30. Con: 1-7-8-16-18-20-29. So-So: 2-6-9-26-27.

As You Like It-Cort, 1/26/50. Pro: 3-4-6-7-9-10-11-12-16-17-18-19-20-22-26-29. Con: 1-2-23-24-25-27-30. So-So: 5-8-14-28.

Clutterbuck-Biltmore, 12/3/49. Pro: 3-5-6-7-8-12-15-17-19-20-21-23-27-30. Con: 1-9-11-13-16-18-22-24-26-28-29. So-So: 2-4-10-14.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-6-7-8-10-11-12-15-17-18-19-20-23-24-26-27-28. Con: 1-9-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

Come Back, Little Sheba-Booth, 2/15/50. Pro: 1-5-8-9-10-11-14-16-17-18-19-20-22-23-26-29. Con: 2-4-7-12-27. So-So: 3-6-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 25 votes. Con: 22. So-So: 6-29. None: 20-21.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Detective Story-Hudson, 3/23/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-14-15-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-26-27-30.

The Devil's Disciple-Royale, 2/21/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-18-19-20-22-23-24-27-29. Con: 30. So-So: 16.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28. So-So: 16-22-27. None: 25.

Great To Be Alive-Winter Garden, 3/23/50. Pro: 2-3-6-9-12-15-17-30. Con: 1-5-7-8-10-11-14-18-23-26-27. So-So: 4-19.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30. None: 13-21.

I Know My Love-Shubert, 11/1/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 1-5-16-20-22-27-29-30.

The Innocents-Playhouse, 2/1/50. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 2-4-28-29-30. None: 21.

Kiss Me, Kate-Century, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

Lost in the Stars-Music Box, 10/30/49. Pro: 1-2-3-5-6-7-10-11-12-14-15-17-18-19-23-26. Con: 8-9-20-21-22-24-25-28-29-30. So-So: 4-27.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 25 votes. Con: 16. So-So: 2-27-30.

Mr. Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-15-17-18-19-20-21-24-25-26-30. Con: 27.

Texas Li'l Darlin'-Hellinger, 11/25/49. Pro: 3-6-9-12-13-14-15-16-17-21-22-24. Con: 1-4-7-8-18-19-23-29-30. So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27.

The Velvet Glove-Golden, 12/26/49. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 2-5-16-18-20-23-27-30. So-So: 1-6-7-29. None: 13-25.

Where's Charley?-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-24-25-26. So-So: 4-27. None: 28.

The Wisteria Tree-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. Pro: 1-3-4-5-6-8-11-12-14-15-17-19-24. Con: 2-7-9-10-16-23-25-26-27-28-30. So-So: 18-29.

